

**Mayor Sylvester Turner**  
*Outline—Catalytic Converters*  
Texas Senate Criminal Justice Committee Hearing  
Thursday, May 26, 2022

Chairman Whitmire and members of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, thank you for allowing me to be here today. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, I along with members of the Houston City Council, community leaders and law enforcement agencies announced the **One Safe Houston** plan, a public safety initiative aimed at holistically addressing and in some cases rebuilding the public safety ecosystem in Houston, Harris County.

One Safe Houston is a \$45 million investment funded by the American Rescue Plan and focuses on four key areas:

- *Violence Reduction and Crime Prevention*
- *Crisis Intervention, Response and Recovery*
- *Youth Outreach Opportunities*
- *Key Community Partnerships*

Let's be clear: violent crime is a public health crisis made worse by the pandemic and easy access to guns demands a comprehensive approach. Our efforts on catalytic converters are part of this violence reduction plan.

On Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, off-duty Harris County Deputy Darren Almendarez was killed while thieves attempted to steal this catalytic converter. This tragedy tracked with a surge in HPD reporting of increased catalytic converter thefts.

- In the first three months of 2022, the Houston Police Department reported 3,188 catalytic converter thefts, a 123 percent increase from the previous year

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, just a month later, the City of Houston passed an ordinance that will stop business-to-business reselling of stolen exhaust emission control devices and require anyone in possession of a cut catalytic converter to show proof of ownership. Failure to show ownership could result in a misdemeanor charge for each one.

- This is on top of House Bill 4110, passed by Rep. Gene Wu and Sen. Carol Alvarado that requires any person selling a catalytic converter to a metal recycler to provide a variety of information, including the year, make, model, and VIN for the vehicle from which the catalytic converter was removed, thumbprint, and certificate of title or other documentation proving ownership.

Even with this ordinance and new state law, there is still the possibility that cut catalytic converters can be sold online or collected and sold out-of-state.

However, this should not deter the State of Texas from leading on this issue and setting up regulations to make the selling of cut catalytic converters as difficult as possible for thieves.

As I said earlier this month, "People need to know that if you steal them, you will pay the price for it. If you are going to do it, we are going to make it as inconvenient as possible for you."

This initiative, part of our One Safe Houston plan, follows other recent actions to make Houston a safer community. The recent action by the Harris County Bail Bond Board creating a 10% bail bond measure came from City pressure and preparation of a City ordinance. We have also mandated exterior lighting and cameras for some business to better deter, identify, and apprehend those committing crimes in our community.

It is my hope the Texas Legislature will build on the Houston model ordinance to make it a statewide policy, helping communities across the state by mandating these commonsense regulations.

I would like to thank the Houston Police Department, specifically Chief Troy Finner, and the men and women who protect

Houstonians every day. I know they are here and can answer specific questions on this policy and I hope you work closely with them in crafting statewide policy.

As Mayor, along with Houston City Council, we want to work collaboratively with the State of Texas to keep our city a safe place for live, work, and raise a family.